

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. - 19. (Cancelled)

20. (Currently Amended) A method for automatically aseptically bottling aseptically sterilized foodstuffs comprising the steps of:

providing a plurality of bottles;

aseptically disinfecting the bottles at a rate greater than 100 bottles per minute wherein the disinfecting is with hot atomized hydrogen peroxide, wherein said plurality of bottles are in an upright position during disinfecting; and

aseptically filling the bottles with aseptically sterilized foodstuffs.

21. (Cancelled)

22. (Currently Amended) A device for automatically aseptically bottling aseptically sterilized foodstuffs comprising:

means for providing a plurality of bottles;

means for aseptically disinfecting the bottles at a rate greater than 100 bottles per minute wherein the means for aseptically disinfecting the bottles further includes means for disinfecting an interior of the bottles with a hot atomized hydrogen peroxide, further wherein said plurality of bottles are in an upright position; and

means for aseptically filling the bottles with aseptically sterilized foodstuffs.

23. (Withdrawn) An aseptic processing apparatus for aseptically bottling aseptically sterilized foodstuffs comprising:

a sterile tunnel for surrounding a plurality of bottles with pressurized sterile air;

a conveying apparatus for moving the plurality of bottles through the sterile tunnel;

a bottle infeed, sterilization and conveying apparatus for sterilizing an exterior surface of each bottle and for feeding the sterilized bottles into the sterile tunnel;

an interior bottle sterilization apparatus for applying a sterilant to an interior surface of each bottle;

an activation and drying apparatus for activating and removing the sterilant from the interior surface of each bottle;

a product filler apparatus for filling the aseptically sterilized plurality of bottles with the aseptically sterilized foodstuffs;

a lidding apparatus for applying a sterilized lid to each bottle; and

a bottle discharge apparatus for removing the bottles from the sterile tunnel.

24. (Withdrawn) The aseptic processing apparatus according to claim 23, wherein the sterile tunnel further includes a plurality of partitions forming a plurality of sterilant concentration zones.

25. (Withdrawn) The aseptic processing apparatus according to claim 23, wherein each bottle has an opening size to height ratio of less than one.

26. (Withdrawn) The aseptic processing apparatus according to claim 23, wherein the sterilant is hydrogen peroxide.

27. (Withdrawn) The aseptic processing apparatus according to claim 23, wherein the sterilant is oxonia.

28. (Withdrawn) The aseptic processing apparatus according to claim 23, further including a lid sterilization apparatus.

29. (Withdrawn) The aseptic processing apparatus according to claim 23, wherein the plurality of bottles are made from plastic.

30. (Withdrawn) The aseptic processing apparatus according to claim 29, wherein the plastic is polyethylene terephthalate.

31. (Withdrawn) The aseptic processing apparatus according to claim 29, wherein the plastic is high density polyethylene.

32. (Withdrawn) The aseptic processing apparatus according to claim 23, further including a feedback control system for maintaining aseptic bottling conditions.

33. (Withdrawn) The aseptic processing apparatus according to claim 23, wherein the product filling apparatus fills the plurality of bottles at a rate greater than 360 bottles per minute.

34. (Withdrawn) The aseptic processing apparatus according to claim 23, wherein the sterile tunnel encloses the interior bottle sterilization apparatus, the activation and drying apparatus, the product filler apparatus, and the lidding apparatus.

35. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein the plurality of bottles are made from a glass.

36. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein the plurality of bottles are made from a plastic.

37. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 36, wherein the plastic is selected from the group: polyethylene terephthalate, and high density polyethylene.

38. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein the aseptic filling is at a rate greater than 100 bottles per minute.

39. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 20, further including capping the bottle with a aseptically disinfected lid.

40. (Canceled)

41. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim ~~40~~ 20, wherein the aseptically disinfecting the bottles includes an application of the hot hydrogen peroxide spray for about 1 second into an interior of the bottle and an activation and removal of the hot hydrogen peroxide using hot aseptically sterilized air for about 24 seconds.

42. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 20, further including a feedback control system for maintaining aseptic bottling conditions.

43. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim ~~40~~ 20, wherein the aseptically disinfecting the bottles includes an application of the hot hydrogen peroxide spray for about 1 second onto an outside surface of the bottle and an activation and removal of the hot hydrogen peroxide using hot aseptically sterilized air for about 24 seconds.

44. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein the step of aseptically filling the bottles further comprises: filling the aseptically disinfected bottling at a rate greater than 360 bottles per minute.

45. (Previously presented) A method for automatically aseptically bottling aseptically sterilized foodstuffs comprising the steps of:

providing a plurality of bottles;

aseptically disinfecting the bottles at a rate greater than 100 bottles per minute; and

aseptically filling the bottles with aseptically sterilized foodstuffs, wherein the aseptically sterilized foodstuffs are sterilized to a level producing at least a 12 log reduction in *Clostridium botulinum*.

46. (Previously presented) A method for automatically aseptically bottling aseptically sterilized foodstuffs comprising the steps of:

providing a plurality of bottles;

aseptically disinfecting the bottles at a rate greater than 100 bottles per minute, wherein the aseptically disinfected plurality of bottles are sterilized to a level producing at least a 6 log reduction in spore organisms; and

aseptically filling the bottles with aseptically sterilized foodstuffs.

47. (Previously presented) A method for automatically aseptically bottling aseptically sterilized foodstuffs comprising the steps of:

providing a plurality of bottles;

aseptically disinfecting the bottles at a rate greater than 100 bottles per minute, wherein the disinfecting the bottles is with hot hydrogen peroxide spray, wherein a residual level of hydrogen peroxide is less than .5 PPM; and

aseptically filling the bottles with aseptically sterilized foodstuffs.

48. (Previously presented) The device according to claim 22, wherein each bottle has an opening size to height ratio of less than one.

49. (Previously presented) The device according to claim 22, wherein the plurality of bottles are made from a glass.

50. (Previously presented) The device according to claim 22, wherein the plurality of bottles are made from a plastic.

51. (Previously presented) The device according to claim 50, wherein the plastic is selected from the group: polyethylene terephthalate and high density polyethylene.

52. (Cancelled)

53. (Previously presented) The device according to claim ~~52~~ 22, wherein the means for disinfecting an interior of the bottles includes an application of the hot hydrogen peroxide spray for about 1 second and an activation and removal of the hot hydrogen peroxide using hot aseptically sterilized air for about 24 seconds.

54. (Previously presented) The device according to claim 22, further including means for feedback control for maintaining aseptic bottling conditions.

55. (Previously presented) The device according to claim 22, wherein means for aseptically disinfecting is provided by one of the group: hydrogen peroxide and oxonia.

56. (Previously presented) The device according to claim 22, wherein means for aseptically disinfecting the bottles includes disinfecting an outside surfaces of the bottles with hydrogen peroxide.

57. (Previously presented) The device according to claim 56, wherein the disinfecting the outside surfaces includes about 1 second for the application of the hot hydrogen peroxide spray and about 24 seconds for an activation and removal of the hot hydrogen peroxide using hot aseptically sterilized air.

58. (Previously presented) The device according to claim 22, wherein the means for aseptically disinfecting the bottles further comprises: aseptically disinfecting the bottles at a rate greater than 360 bottles per minute.

59. (Previously presented) The device according to claim 22, wherein the means for aseptically filling the bottles further comprises: aseptically filling the bottles at a rate greater than 100 bottles per minute.

60. (Previously presented) A device for automatically aseptically bottling aseptically sterilized foodstuffs comprising:

means for providing a plurality of bottles;

means for aseptically disinfecting the bottles at a rate greater than 100 bottles per minute; and

means for aseptically filling the bottles with aseptically sterilized foodstuffs, wherein the aseptically sterilized foodstuffs are sterilized at a level producing at least a 12 log reduction in *Clostridium botulinum*.

61. (Previously presented) A device for automatically aseptically bottling aseptically sterilized foodstuffs comprising:

means for providing a plurality of bottles;

means for aseptically disinfecting the bottles at a rate greater than 100 bottles per minute, wherein the aseptically disinfected bottles are sterilized to a level producing at least a 6 log reduction in spore organisms; and

means for aseptically filling the bottles with aseptically sterilized foodstuffs.

62. (Previously presented) A device for automatically aseptically bottling aseptically sterilized foodstuffs comprising:

means for providing a plurality of bottles;

means for aseptically disinfecting the bottles at a rate greater than 100 bottles per minute, wherein the means for aseptically disinfecting the bottles further includes means for disinfecting an interior of the bottles with a hot hydrogen peroxide spray, further wherein the means for disinfecting an interior of the bottles includes an application of the hot hydrogen peroxide spray for about 1 second and an activation and removal of the hot hydrogen peroxide using hot aseptically sterilized air for about 24 seconds, wherein the residual level of hydrogen peroxide is less than .5 PPM; and

means for aseptically filling the bottles with aseptically sterilized foodstuffs.

63. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein the aseptically sterilized foodstuffs are not a beverage.

64. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 22, wherein the aseptically sterilized foodstuffs are not a beverage.

65. (Cancelled)

66. (Cancelled)

67. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 65, wherein the plurality of bottles are made from one of glass and plastic.
68. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 65, wherein the aseptic filling is at a rate greater than 100 bottles per minute.
69. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 65, wherein the disinfecting the bottles is with hot hydrogen peroxide spray.
70. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 65, wherein the step of aseptically filling the bottles further comprises: filling the aseptically disinfected bottling at a rate greater than 360 bottles per minute.
71. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 69, wherein the aseptically disinfecting the bottles includes an application of the hot hydrogen peroxide spray into an interior of the bottle and an activation and removal of the hot hydrogen peroxide using hot aseptically sterilized air.
72. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein aseptically denotes meeting the United States FDA level of aseptic.
73. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 22, wherein aseptically denotes meeting the United States FDA level of aseptic.